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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: social integration

Submitted by: Congregations of St. Joseph, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic Social Council, UNANIMA International and the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Gender and social inclusion

1. It is 15 years since the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, in which world leaders committed themselves "to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights ... and participation of all people" and to "ensure the protection and full integration into the economy and society of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons" (see A/CONF.166/9, annex I). This goal of social inclusion has yet to be realized. Persistent gender inequality excludes half the population from many areas of social life.

2. The world is experiencing the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, and this has weakened the possibility of achieving the social and economic development goals necessary for social inclusion. Multiple crises, economic, food and energy crises, "are unfolding against the background of the longer-term predicament of climate change. Climate change and its economic, environmental and social impacts will pose an unprecedented challenge to the cohesion of societies".[1] Women, particularly women living in poverty, bear a disproportionate burden of these impacts and do not have the resources to mitigate them.

Poverty

3. Eradicating poverty is one of the greatest challenges the world faces and is key to delivering social inclusion. Addressing the feminization of poverty must be a priority. The World Bank estimates that 1.4 billion people were living in extreme poverty in 2005,[2] and this is increasing with the current crises. The International Labour Organization states that 70 per cent of the world's absolute poor are women.[3] It is imperative that social protection mechanisms be put into place and basic human rights upheld. In the short term, measures such as cash transfer programmes (see A/HRC/11/9) and microfinance are needed, as they give some social protection and place resources in the hands of women. These are significant means of addressing economic vulnerability and so reduce the risk of families being exploited by traffickers.

4. Globalization has opened up opportunities for economic growth and development but has also caused increasing poverty and unemployment and has led to social disintegration, with a widening of the gap between rich and poor. Taken as a whole, macroeconomic policies[2] maintain gender inequalities, impede the economic empowerment of women and exacerbate the plight of people living in poverty. An "economics of solidarity" that aims first to serve the needs of human communities, and not exclusively to promote the economic gain of a few, is needed.

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[1] Commission for Social Development, forty-seventh session, Chairperson's summary.

[2] *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women's Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, including Microfinance* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.IV.7).

[3] International Labour Organization, Gender Promotion Programme, available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems; accessed 7 November 2007.

Education

5. It is essential that the right to education for girls and women be fulfilled. The achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2 is a priority in moving towards the goals of poverty eradication, maternal and child health and combating HIV/AIDS. Every year of schooling increases a girl's earning power by 10 to 20 per cent,[4] but girls in developing countries are the most likely to be excluded. Engagement in education goes beyond capacity to earn and enhanced economic development; it is a protective factor against impoverishment, promotes social inclusion of women and girls and has intergenerational benefits for the community. Any reduction in this social spending will have far-reaching social and human costs and erode the gains made in social inclusion through instruments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Trafficking

6. One of the most excluded groups in society is trafficked women and children, whose integration into either their country of origin or country of destination is extremely limited.

7. Social exclusion and exploitation of trafficked persons is a systemic problem. "The link between trafficking and inequality, the nexus between trafficking and entrenched gender and racial discrimination, the connection between trafficking and sexual exploitation, including through prostitution, and the link between trafficking and inefficient migration regimes that push migrants into the hands of traffickers"[5] must be addressed. Fulfilment of Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3 would lessen the economic vulnerability of women and reduce the conditions easily exploited for trafficking and the prostitution of women.

8. Our non-governmental organizations working in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa report that the global recession has not only been a financial crisis but has also resulted in increased levels of violence and an escalation of trafficking. Research by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, which reported that the global financial crisis had led to an increase in the number of women entering the sex trafficking industry in Cambodia, corroborates these grass-roots observations.[6] Further research is needed to ascertain the extent of this linkage.

Violence against women

9. Gender discrimination and violence against women are serious barriers to social inclusion. It is unacceptable that globally up to six out of every ten women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetimes.[7] Gender-based violence is an abuse of a woman's human rights, limits her participation in society and has extensive consequences for her family. Preventive measures must be implemented through human rights education for women and girls and education of

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[4] Ricardo Hausmann, Laura Tyson and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2009* (Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2009).

[5] Navanethem Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, statement at the United Nations special event on "Giving voice to the victims and survivors of human trafficking", 22 October 2009.

[6] See www.no-trafficking.org.

[7] See www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women.

men and boys regarding relationships and male identity. There needs to be an end to impunity for perpetrators of violence against women and girls so that human rights are upheld in both customary law and national legislation. Ending gender-based violence and discrimination are critical to social integration and need to be enshrined in both law and practice.

Good practices

10. Gender-sensitive social policies and budgeting are key to fostering the social integration of women. Such social inclusion and gender empowerment are evidenced in the policy adopted by the African Union.[8] This needs to be replicated.

11. We offer two examples of programmes that promote social inclusion of women. In the tribal community of Karanje, India, self-help groups have led to the empowerment of women through microcredit schemes. The empowerment of the women further led to involvement in local self-government groups known as "Gram Sabhas" and "Panchayats". Women participate in meetings and are trained to speak for their rights. Some are elected as members of the Panchayats and participate in decision-making, thus improving their own lives and the lives of others in the community.

12. Ruhama, a non-governmental organization in Ireland, has established a programme that supports the social integration of trafficked women. The staff work to build trusting relationships and support for them to recover from trauma. Medical care, legal advice and programmes in English, computers and participating in Irish life are provided. Women are accompanied through the process of seeking asylum and assisted in accessing accommodation. They grow in confidence and move on to work or further education and training. This programme demonstrates how long-term support with multifaceted programmes can assist in the social integration of vulnerable women.

13. These case studies demonstrate that policies and programmes that are people-centred and locally based, promote self-determination and provide opportunity for livelihood improvement, enhance social integration and build more inclusive communities.

Recommendations

14. Social inclusion of half the world's population is not an option; it is a necessity and it is a right. Gender empowerment, economic justice and gender equity must be embedded in public policies and programmes if there is to be an inclusive society. We recommend that Governments:

(a) Focus their efforts and policies to address the root causes and the feminization of poverty and do so with the active participation of persons living in poverty;

(b) Ensure that people living in poverty have access to productive resources and social protection to enable them to participate in society and limit their vulnerability to exploitation;

[8] African Union, Common position on social integration.

(c) Promote effective laws against trafficking, prostitution and related forms of sexual exploitation, including provisions criminalizing the demand for trafficking and prostitution, based on the principles of human rights and gender equality;

(d) Confront gender-based violence and institutionalized gender discrimination by implementing laws and programmes that promote the gender equality that is essential for social integration;

(e) Ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in this thirtieth anniversary year of the Convention;

(f) Include a gender analysis of all policies and ensure gender-responsive budgeting;

(g) Recognize that global social justice is a public good beneficial to all and that developed countries must contribute by maintaining their official development assistance commitments and implementing fair multilateral trade policies.

Note: The present statement is endorsed by the following non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC): Franciscans International; and the following non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with ECOSOC: Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Dominican Leadership Conference; International Federation of Women Lawyers; International Federation of Women in Legal Careers; International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Loretto Community; Salesian Missions; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries.